

# INDIATOBACCOWATCH (ITW) – Newsletter

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## **HEADLINES OF THE MONTH:**

- ❖ *Excise duty on tobacco products raised by 10-15% in Union Budget*
- ❖ *Tobacco Board to buy excess tobacco from unregistered growers*
- ❖ *Himachal Pradesh makes licence must for tobacco shops*
- ❖ *Operation Shalimar in Kerala to stop smuggling of tobacco products*
- ❖ *Students used as peddlers of tobacco products in Kerala*
- ❖ *Tobacco based intoxicants sold near school in Chennai*
- ❖ *Gutkha firm owner trying to bribe a cop caught red-handed*

### **Excise duty on tobacco products raised by 10-15% in Union Budget**

Union Budget did not change the basic custom duty on cigarette but additional duty of excise on cigarette has been increased with a net impact of 10% tax rise across cigarette sizes. The government also increased excise duty on gutkha, chewing tobacco (including filter khaini) and jarda scented tobacco from 70% to 81%. It has not changed taxes on biri.

### **Tobacco Board to buy excess tobacco from unregistered growers**

Tobacco growers in Mysuru and Hassan districts, the key growing areas in the State, can exult as the Tobacco Board, on the diktat of the Centre, will soon start purchasing excess Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco produced by registered and unregistered growers for the 2015-16 Karnataka crop season. Each registered grower has to pay Rs.2 a kg and 7.5% of the proceeds of the sale to the tobacco fund for the excess FCV produced by him or her to the extent of 10 per cent of the quota authorized for the crop season. Likewise, Rs.2 a kg and 15% of the proceeds of the sale should be contributed to the fund by an unregistered grower.

### **Himachal Pradesh makes licence must for tobacco shops**

Himachal Pradesh government has decided to make it mandatory for all shops to have a licence for sale of tobacco products, including cigarettes, an official said. The Bill on this is expected to be tabled in the Assembly during the Budget session starting from February 25. The vendors said the registration system for selling cigarettes would increase corruption among government functionaries and affect their livelihood.

## **Operation Shalimar in Kerala to stop smuggling of tobacco products**

In view of the large-scale arrival of migrant workers, the Ernakulam rural police have launched a new drive, Operation Shalimar, focussing on Aluva railway station, which is said to be an entry point of drugs to the State. The operation, launched on February 19, led to the arrest of 20 Assam and West Bengal natives on the first day of the drive. "We have specific information on the operation of rackets in States like West Bengal, which are engaged in transporting banned tobacco products, cheap quality ganja and psychotropic drugs to Kerala. The drugs are distributed mainly among migrant labourers in places such as Perumbavur, which is regarded as the hub of migrant workers in Kerala," pointed out V.K. Sanil Kumar, Deputy Superintendent of the Anti-Narcotics Cell.

## **Students used as peddlers of tobacco products in Kerala**

While the law bans the sale of tobacco products near educational institutions, sellers are resorting to new tactics like employing students themselves as peddlers. One such instance came to light recently when the father of a student from Kothad found an expensive flavoured cigar from his son's bathroom. Later, the class X student admitted that he had purchased it from a friend at school. The boy confessed that he had been buying cigarettes from the senior student who was a peddler in the campus. When asked about the source of money, father came to know that the boy had sold his bicycle for Rs.500 which was finally bought by the shop keeper at Maliankara. "The shopkeeper used to sell cigarette to school students. A complaint has been filed against the shopkeeper based on the statement of students who also informed that they had been using cigarette after forming a gang.

## **Tobacco based intoxicants sold near school in Chennai**

'Cool Lip,' a substance which is said to be freely available outside some government schools in many parts of Chennai. A tobacco-based product, it is sold in sachets, each at Rs.12. Teachers and parents are perturbed by the fact that students have easy access to such materials. "Cool Lip is sold in small sachets in many petty shops. Students roll it under their tongue even during class hours and sit in a daze," said a teacher of a government school in Kolathur on condition of anonymity.

## **Gutkha firm owner trying to bribe a cop caught red handed in Odisha**

Vigilance sleuths arrested Brahmapur's Maa Biraja Products owner K Rabindra Kumar Patra for giving bribe of Rs2 lakh. During a raid by police huge quantities of plain Gutkha and Zarda Gutkha along with manufacturing machines were seized at both. Patra produced some Xerox copy of the documents relating to storage and production of the above materials. In order to ascertain genuineness of the Xerox documents and available materials, Inspector Tripathy deployed some staffs to guard both the godowns and directed accused Patra to produce the original documents in support of his business. The accused then met the inspector in his office and offered him Rs2 lakh with a request to release the Gutkha and not to take any legal action against him or his staffs. Tripathy reported this to the vigilance team who then caught the Gutkha firm owner red handed.

**IndiaTobaccoWatch (ITW)** is an initiative by organizations working in tobacco control across India to monitor, document and counter the activities of tobacco industry. Spread the word.

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